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ABSTRACT

Implications of Maslow's Need Hierarchy are considered in this paper, along with possible qualifications to the suggested structure and potential effects of superimposing relative deprivation theory onto the hierarchy as an approach to adult education. The interfacing of needs and alternative structurings is discussed in terms of two theories: (1) that the level of need within any sphere is directly related to the need's immediacy as perceived by the individual, and (2) immediacy of more basic needs will arise less frequently as the individual matures. These alternatives help the author take issue with Maslow, who, even though he supports growth motivation, fails to achieve a behavioral definition thereof. A relationship is demonstrated between the environment and individual behavior using concepts of "maturation needs" and relative deprivation theory. The author hypothesizes that (1) if adult attitudes of either acceptance (of an unchangeable present state) or resignation can be altered, the instinctive need for maturation toward higher needs may prompt individual action, and (2) similarly, gratification of lower needs will create a vacuum effect which the instinctive maturation process will attempt to fill. If education is truly accessible and offers to meet adult needs, then, the author maintains, the adult will opt for it. Thus, for educators, it is suggested that they learn to manipulate student perception of the environment such that learning and education offer reinforcement and needs gratification. (CP)

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A Second Look at Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Needs©

by Charles M. White

The purpose of this article is to consider the implications of Abraham H. Maslow's "Need Hierarchy", [1] some possible qualifications to the suggested structure, and the potential effects of superimposing relative deprivation theory[2] onto Maslow's need hierarchy as an approach to Adult Education. In the course of the following discussion a second look will be taken at the interfacing of needs as Maslow explained them as well as some alternative structurings. A review of deprivation motivation combined with Maslow's comments regarding the instinctoid nature of higher needs will then be utilized to take issue with his concept of growth motivation. Through usage of Maslow's statements and the comments of Salvatore Maddi a relationship will be demonstrated between the environment and the behavior of the individual. Once this core relationship has been demonstrated, a hypothesis will be constructed using relative deprivation theory to exhibit the potentiality for a manipulation capacity that affects behavior. It is this controlled manipulation that will be offered as a facilitating methodology for use in educating adults.

Before progressing any further, a reiteration of Maslow's Need Hierarchy is required. The following illustration is indicative of the prepotency assigned various needs by Maslow.

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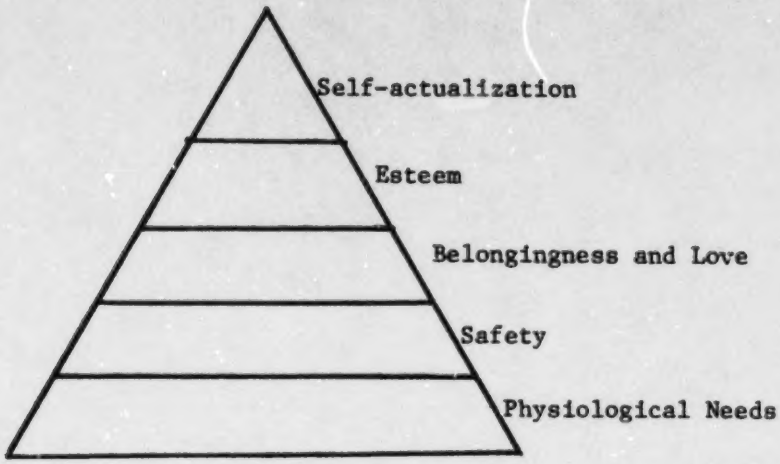

ILLUSTRATION 1

According to Maslow the clear emergence of any given level of needs usually rests upon some prior satisfaction of the needs at the lower levels.[3] The degree of fixity of the hierarchy of basic needs seems to have given rise to doubt within Maslow's own mind. The effect of this doubt is reflected in his attempts to first qualify the rigidity by outlining a number of exceptions,[4] and then secondly in an attempt to allow for the emergence of a higher need after a partial satisfaction of the less prepotent need.[5] To illustrate the point Maslow assigned arbitrary percentages to each of the five echelons. The resulting configuration reflected a description of the hierarchy in terms of decreasing percentages toward the higher needs. I feel Maslow was reaching for a more definitive structuring of the hierarchy through these passages; one such as presented here.

The proposed adaptation to Maslow's structure is intended to lessen the ambiguities of numerous exceptions, arbitarary quantification and the unavoidable encounters in which it appears that

an individual is on more than one level. Graphically expressed below is the adaptation to the structuring of the hierarchy forwarded here.

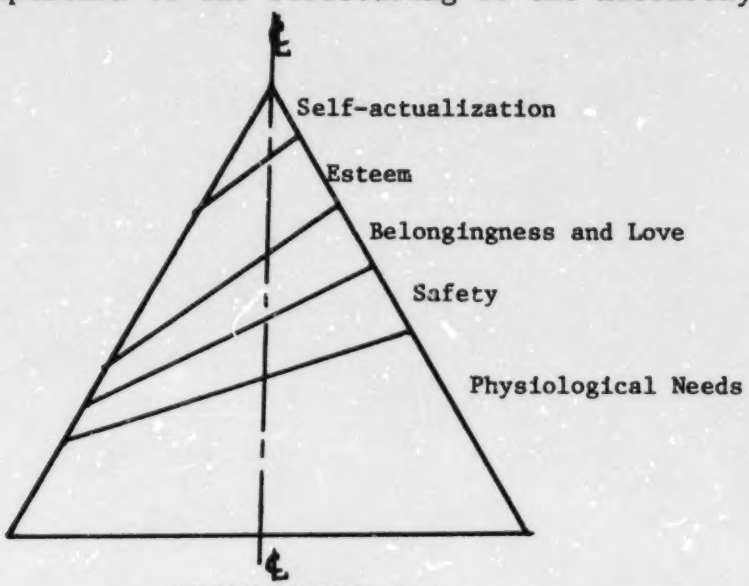

ILLUSTRATION 2

This reconstruction of needs interfaces within the hierarchy reveals some drastic changes in the relationship of the needs to one another. While there are no pure reversals in the ordering, levels of need within each realm have become significant. Stated as a premise--at certain points in the hierarchy of basic needs it is plausible that minimal levels of higher needs can become more basic than maximum levels of lower needs; further, the probability of such a point existing is dependent on the position of higher need relative to that of the lower need, and also to the position of the needs being considered. Another variant affecting the probability is the individual, and this aspect will be addressed later. Latitude is offered in this structure for Maslow's dependence on gratification of lower needs prior to the

emergence of higher needs. A unique view of this new structuring was seen by Maslow but lacking the perspective of this altered prepotency he was resigned to accept it as an exception to the theory. Maslow stated the exception as follows:

> Another cause of reversal of the hierarchy is that when a need has been satisfied for a long time, this need may be undervaluated. People who have never experienced chronic hunger are apt to underestimate its effects and to look upon food as a rather unimportant thing. If they are dominated by a higher need, this higher need will seem to be the most important of all. It then becomes possible, and indeed does actually happen, that they may, for the sake of this higher need, put themselves into the position of being deprived in a more basic need. We may expect that after a long time deprivation of the more basic need there will be a tendency to reevaluate both needs so that the more prepotent need will actually become consciously prepotent for the individual who may have given it up lightly. Thus a man who has given up his job rather than lose his self-respect, and who then starves for six months or so, may be willing to take his job back even at the price of losing his self-respect.[6]

Two theories operating here allow a view of this situation in the context of the revised hierarchy and suggest that this situation can and does occur without disrupting the integrity of the hierarchy. First is the theory that need is subjective and only significant to the extent that it is acknowledged by the individual. This allows the initial situation to arise. By placing a sheet of paper perpendicular to the center line of the hierarchy shown in Illustration 2 and moving the edge upward it can be found that a point will be encountered at

which the lower levels (more basic) of the esteem needs are covered and the higher levels (less basic) of physiological needs are uncovered. At the time the man quit the job his level of need for self-esteem was in the area below the top edge of your sheet of paper and his level of physiological need was in the area above the edge. Thus his self-esteem at that point in time was more basic than his hunger need.

The second theory operating here is that the level of need within any sphere is directly related to the immediacy of the need as it is perceived by the individual. This accounts for the man's decision to return to work. As the more basic need, hunger, became a reality, its immediacy necessarily increased causing a shift in the relative positioning of the levels of the two needs. As the line, sheet of paper, regresses, it can be seen that the man's need for self-esteem will dissipate as the level of the physiological needs becomes more basic. This theory also explains why it appeared that the man had developed a higher need, self-esteem, while two lower needs, belongingness/love and safety, appeared to be far from gratified (a large amount of surface area not covered by the sheet of paper). The circumstances would have to be that those needs were satiated in the respect that the individual perceived no immediate threat to those needs.

The fewer the number of confrontations an individual encounters, the more solidly he becomes entrenched in the higher needs. A maturation of sorts takes place in the respect that the individual's perception of immediacy alters. Although no rate is presented here for the maturation process some variables

affecting the rate shall be mentioned. Take the case of age and education cited by Maslow ---

> As the child grows up, sheer knowledge and familiarity as well as better motor development make these dangers less and less dangerous and more and more manageable. Throughout life it may be said that one of the main conative functions of education is this neutralizing of apparent dangers through knowledge, e.g., I am not afraid of thunder because I know something about it.[7]

There are indications throughout history that tolerance develops to deprivation of lower needs as illustrated by what Salvatore Maddi refers to as ".....countless examples of people who have been significantly creative in spite of early lives that hardly included much nuturance, love, and respect."[8] But this tolerance is a part of the maturation process. Maslow acknowledges this process and expressed his point of view in a want/behavior dichotomy. He states that a person will want the more basic of two needs when deprived in both, but concedes that "....there is no necessary implication here that he will act upon his desires."[9] He also makes the following statement:

> A greater value is usually placed upon the higher need than upon the lower need by those who have been gratified in both. Such people will sacrifice more for the higher satisfaction, and furthermore will more readily be able to withstand lower deprivation. For example, they will find it easier to live ascetic lives, to withstand danger for the sake of principle, to give up money and prestige for the sake of self-actualization. Those who have known both universally regard self-respect as a higher, more valuable subjective experience than a filled belly.[10]

Thus, although one may want to revert to the more basic need, the behavior displayed may reflect an altogether different tendency. The degree to which this is true depends upon the stage of maturation of the individual. In turn a dependence is conveyed to the two theories previously proffered. The first of which is that need is only significant to the degree to which the individual is willing to acknowledge it. As the person matures, the level of the more basic needs necessary to cause them to be acknowledged will increase. Secondly, the immediacy of more basic needs will arise less frequently as the individual matures because fewer things will appear threatening and due to the developing reasoning power, fewer situations will be entered that could lead to a direct confrontation between needs. An example of this latter point could be shown by comparing a less mature person quitting a job rather than losing self-respect and a more mature persons who foreseeing the inevitable results of such a rash decision seeking some alternative solution. The development and refinement of escape mechanisms come into play here, but being out of the context of this article will not be further discussed.

Up to this point maturation has been addressed as a natural phenomena, this is based on Maslow's concept that higher needs are as much instinctoid as the lower needs. The following passages reiterate this conceptulization in Maslow's language:

> Such a point of view, namely (1) higher needs and lower needs have different properties and (2) that these higher needs as well as the lower needs must be included in the repertory of basic and given human nature (not as different from and opposed to it).....[11]

> Recognizing the higher needs to be instinctoid and biological, precisely as biological as the need for food, has many repercussions....[12]

Keeping in mind these statements, especially the latter one, turn now to Salvatore Maddi's review of Maslow's concepts of growth motivation and deprivation motivation.[13] Maddi attacks the concept of growth motivation on the grounds that it is logically inconsistent. He feels that it assumes that there exists a kind of motivation which does not involve striving toward something that is lacking. The inconsistency, states Maddi, is that the motivation construct is such that in order to define a motive, one must specify a goal state that is to be achieved, and the course of action instrumental to reaching the goal. This definition of the motivation construct was taken from R. S. Peters' The Concept of Motivation, Humanities press, New York (1958). Maddi sums up the critical analysis by stating that he feels Maslow is reaching for a distinction between kinds of motivation that is of value, but that the value is poorly stated by the terms deprivation and growth motivation.[14]

Maslow supports growth motivation by opposing the "traditional" definition of motivation. His defense of the presence is illustrated in the following passage addressing a defining of motivation.

> One last word on definition. Many of the problems that have plagued writers in this area, as they attempted to define and delimit motivation, are a consequence of the exclusive demand for behavioral, externally observable criteria. The original criterion of motivation and the one that is still used by all human beings except behavioral psychologists is the subjective one. I am motivated when I feel desire or want or yearning or wish or lack. No objectively observable state has yet been

> found that correlates decently with these subjective reports, i.e., no good behavioral definition of motivation has yet been found.[15]

The brunt then, it appears, of Maslow's arguments is that growth motivation does not so much involve the repairing of existing deficiencies as the development of new awarenesses or abilities; it is an expansion or growth rather than merely an activity of previously acknowledged needs. Regardless of the phrasing, the message appears ambiguous in the context of Maslow's theory of the instinctoid nature of higher needs. If they are in fact instinctoid and man does, as a result of their "instinctoid and biological" nature, seek them out, then the deprivation motivation construct fits the situation. There is a goal state to be achieved and a course of action instrumental to reaching the goal state can be charted. Here, as throughout this article, the significance of the individual cannot be stressed too sternly. Just as each man is different, so is the rate of maturation and the itensity of needs for each.

Environment, also, is a major factor in determining the degree of freedom the individual will exercise in the maturation process. Man is the dependent variable and the environment is the fixed, independent variable if the man is deficiency motivated according to Maslow. To quote Maslow once again:

> The needs for safety, belongingness, love relations and for respect can be satisfied only by other people, i.e., only from outside the person. This means considerable dependence on the environment. A person in this dependent position cannot really be said to be governing himslef, or in control of his own fate. He must be beholden to the sources of supply of needed gratifications.

> Their wishes, their whims, their rules and laws govern him and must be appeased lest he jeopordize his sources of supply. He must be, to an extent, "other directed", and must be sensitive to other peoples's approval, affection, and good will. This is the same as saying that he must adapt and adjust by being flexible and responsive and by changing himself to fit the external situation. He is the dependent variable; the environment is the fixed, independent variable.[16]

Maturing toward self-actualization then is dependent upon the environment, an environment that is so often seen as hostile. Few men perceive the environment as safe for a period of time lengthy enough to reach the plateau referred to as self-actualization. Maturation does occur however, with the rate affected by education, age, environment, the individual, etc., as previously mentioned. Herein lies the key for the educator. It is not enough that educators be cognizant of these factors. They must instead seek methods to use the information in a constructive manner to increase learning in their students. One such way of approaching this objective is to manipulate the students perception of the environment to the extent that learning offers positive reinforcement and needs gratification. To do this, the student must be motivated to perceive the need for education as highly desirous and immediate. Relative deprivation theory can be initiated to obtain this end.

Relative deprivation is defined as an individual's perception of the discrepancy between his value expectations and his value capabilities. "Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of getting and holding."[17] Therefore

this theory, too, as indicated by its nomenclature, operates on the concept of deprivation. A man may subjectively feel that he is being deprived with reference to his expectations but a more objective observer might evaluate the situation quite differently seeing no cause for need. Similarly, as Runciman put it, "if people have no reason to expect or hope for more than they can achieve, they will be less discontent with what they have, or even grateful simply to be able to hold on to it."[18]

Accepting the theory of relative deprivation as true, the educator can visualize a plethora of adaptations. It is accepted as fact in adult education that to be successful a program or class must meet the needs of the students as they are perceived by the students. Thus, fifteen students, fifteen perceptions of need. Relative deprivation theory can be used in the classroom, traditional or non-traditional, to create a composite need which all learners can relate to and perceive as an individual need. Ideally, prior planning on the part of the instructor/facilitator will have resulted in this composite need being the crux of the class. The positive aspect of relative deprivation fills classrooms, workshops, and seminars daily. Those who feel they are capable of achieving more than they have often turn to education as the course of action instrumental in achieving the higher goal state. Many more in this positive state could be reached if they could be shown that education is a means of achieving their desired end.

The negative aspect, on the other hand, offers the greater challenge and perhaps the greatest potential rewards. There is an extremely large portion of the adults in today's society that have resigned themselves to accept their current state of being as unchangeable. They have, as Runcimen stated in the relative deprivation model, no reason to expect or hope for more than they can achieve so they are not discontented with what they have. If this attitude can be altered through a manipulation of the environment, i.e., the adult's reference group's attitudes, to a point at which the individual becomes dissatisfied with his current state, it can be said that deprivation will exist. Utilizing the concepts of relative deprivation theory the adult education community could then increase the level of frustration until the instinctoid need for maturation toward higher needs feels a heightened sense of immediacy and prompts the individual to action. At this point if the education is readily accessible and offers to meet the subjective needs of the concerned adult, he will likely opt for this course of action.

Exactly how the environment is affected or manipulated is at the discretion of the innovative program planner. Any successful campaign aimed at elevating the self-image of adults will cause lower needs to be gratified. Gratified lower needs will then create a vacuum effect which the instinctive maturation process will attempt to satiate. Publicity campaigns stressing the learning capabilities of adults, the advent of community colleges offering community interest classes, the initiation of

continuing education units, all have been designed to re-motivate adults. A major factor of any success will be the degree to which the legitimizers can be influenced and that this is a consideration from the beginning is imperative.

A great deal of research must be done before any concrete theories can be formulated and thoroughly sounded out based on the concepts set forth here. As Adult Education flourishes throughout America however, many such ideas will be offered for examination by others in the field as well as by those from other disciplines. Eventually, after many such efforts, principles will evolve to more and more clearly identify the multi-faceted discipline currently referred to as Adult Education.

FOOTNOTE PAGE

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